

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Sept. 1, 2007

**DTRA ASSISTS ALBANIA WITH CHEMICAL WEAPON DESTRUCTION**

FORT BELVOIR, Alexandria, VA – Today, while visiting Albania, Dr. James A. Tegnalia, director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), congratulated Albania as the first nation to certify to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) that it completely eliminated its chemical weapons stockpile.

The U.S. Department of Defense's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, implemented by DTRA, assisted the Government of Albania by conducting chemical weapon destruction operations to meet a Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) mandate. Destruction of approximately 16 metric tons of bulk chemical agents began in February 2007 and was completed July 10, 2007. The U.S. contractor Washington Group International destroyed the chemical weapon stockpile using a thermal treatment technology (incinerator). DTRA oversaw agent destruction in coordination with the Government of Albania.

"The United States is gratified by the cooperation we received from the Government of Albania in making this the first use of CTR assistance to solve weapons of mass destruction proliferation problems outside the former Soviet Union," said Dr. Tegnalia. "This project reflects the close working relations between Albania and the United States and our common approach to dealing with proliferation and arms control issues."

Congress permitted funding of the Albania chemical weapon destruction in the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, when it authorized the President to use up to \$50 million per year in CTR program funding for threat reduction activities outside the former Soviet Union.

"This was an important first test of the Nunn-Lugar program outside the former Soviet Union, proving that we can work with other governments in new environments," said Senator Richard G. Lugar in a recent statement. "And it shows the value of expanding the Nunn-Lugar program so that the United States can respond to non-proliferation opportunities wherever they may appear." In November 1991, Senator Lugar and former Senator Sam Nunn authored the Nunn-Lugar Act, which established the CTR Program.

In 2002, Albania declared the chemical agent stockpile to the OPCW under the provisions of the CWC. The Government of Albania requested U.S. assistance to eliminate its bulk chemical agent stockpile, and the destruction took place in a safe, secure, and ecologically sound manner.

-more-

## **DTRA ASSISTS ALBANIA/2-2-2**

DTRA safeguards America and its allies from weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives) by providing capabilities to reduce, eliminate, and counter the threat, and mitigate its effects. This Department of Defense combat support agency is located at Fort Belvoir, Va., and operates field offices worldwide.